

Both Parties Know Significant Latino Support

Is Needed To Win the White House in 2012

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(Washington, DC) – *Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL) was reelected Tuesday to a tenth term in the U.S. Congress representing the Fourth District of Illinois in Chicago. In the 111th Congress, Rep. Gutierrez is Chairman of the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit, Chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Task Force on Immigration, and is also a Member of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security, and International Law. The following is a statement by Rep. Gutierrez.*

In key states and districts, Latino voters showed their muscle and turned key races. Predictions just a few weeks ago that they would stay home -- and advertising and advocacy campaigns to

encourage non-voting -- didn't pan out. Latinos demonstrated in their numbers and engagement that they are a force in American politics.

When the GOP deploys harsh anti-immigration politics - demonizing and attacking Latinos - Latino and immigrant voters push back at the ballot box. Nevada is the clearest example, but the two statewide races in California and others races showed the power of this community as a voting bloc.

Latino citizens responded to Majority Leader Harry Reid's aggressive pursuit of immigration reform by voting for him in overwhelming numbers. They were clearly the difference in his victory. Senator Reid is a champion for Latinos, immigrants and working people in Nevada and the nation. He embraced immigration reform as his issue and many called him crazy because of it. When we went to him and said it was time to call for a vote on the DREAM Act, he immediately put it on the schedule. He stood by us. He fought for Latinos and immigrant voters and for sensible immigration reform that establishes the rule of law. Facing some of the most vicious political attacks I can remember, he responded with conviction and courage. I am very proud of Majority Leader Reid and the people of Nevada who support him.

Arizona's SB 1070 was an undercurrent that charged this election for Latino voters. I saw it campaigning this fall in Ohio, Florida, Nevada, and Illinois. Even if we followed the GOP agenda and somehow shut off immigration tomorrow, the power of the Latino electorate is growing and will have a significant impact on races at the federal, state, and local levels for generations to come.

Neither political party can expect to win the White House without a significant percentage of the Latino vote and they both know it. The midterms do not change the fact that we continue to deport 400,000 people a year, more than half of whom aren't criminals, and that we are stretching the capacity of our detention system, legal system, and law enforcement because of our mass deportation approach to immigration. It is unsustainable as a policy and morally indefensible. Immigration is not an issue that will solve itself. The rule of law is not improved but weakened by a fifty state patchwork of laws and implementing whatever tough-sounding gimmick the hardliners come up with next will not solve the problem either. If Republican opposition prevents us from seriously addressing immigration legislatively, then the President must address the toll deportations are taking on American families and neighborhoods through administrative action.

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